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4 LATIN COUNTRIES SCORED ON PRESS

Meeting in Mexico Hears
of Government Restraints

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MEXICO CITY, Oct. 23— Four countries in the Western Hemisphere have no freedom of the press whatsoever and the pretensions to a free press by some other countries are doubtful, a press gathering was told here this week.

The charges were raised by the Freedom of the Press Committee of the Inter-American Press Association, which concluded its 20th annual assembly here Thursday. The organization's committee said that there was no press freedom in Haiti, Bolivia, Honduras or Paraguay.

The committee charged that news was being managed in the United States and in Latin America. It reiterated its stand against monopolies of any nature that might affect the freedom of the press.

Particular criticism was leveled at alleged inequities in newsprint supply, equipment, freight rates and, especially, legislation dealing with or taxing advertising.

Concern Expressed

The committee gave its approval to Mexico, the host country, as having freedom of the press. It expressed its concern, however, over a system by which a quasigovernmental organization, Productora Importadora de Papel Sa, had a monopoly on newsprint. The organization distributes newsprint to virtually all Mexican papers at advantageous rates.

The newspaper situation in Ecuador was termed "fluid." The committee explained that all reports indicated there had been attacks on newspapers in Guayaquil and that some newspapermen there had been imprisoned.

A heated debate arose in the committee and later in the General Assembly over the status of press freedom in Guatemala.

Roberto Carpio, editor of El Grafico, and Roberto Alejos, a Guatemalan political exile representing La Hora, maintained there were glaring infringements on freedom of the press in the Guatemalan capital.

Censorship Lifted

John R. Reitemeyer, outgoing president of the organization, said that he had communicated with Guatemala's chief executive, Col Enrique Peralta Azurdia, and that subsequently censorship had been lifted in Guatemala.

Mr. Alejos retorted that a bomb had been placed in La Hora, allegedly by Government employees, and the editor, Clemente Marroquin Rojas, had been threatened with exile.

A compromise report was issued stating that the Guatemalans had insisted there was no freedom of the press but that members of the committee had noted the lifting of censorship in Guatemala.

The committee dealt extensively with the Government's participation in news distribution in the United States, particularly with a market report being distributed by the Department of Agriculture. It noted that a recently enacted law directed the Secretary of Agriculture to see to it that a leased-wire system be limited strictly to agricultural market reporting.

Efforts to Control News

In further reference to the United States's position in the Western Hemisphere press, the committee report said that "the struggle to control the channels of communication is never-ending, in efforts to impose discriminatory taxes, restrictive and regulatory licenses and, in a more subtle way, bureaucratic withholding of nonsecurity information."

It was noted that in recent court rulings, two suits in Birmingham, Ala., against The New York Times and libel suits against the Benton Harbor, Mich., News-Palladium and the Jacksonville, Fla., Times-Union, had been dismissed.

In Southern states alone, it was reported, at least 17 libel actions had been brought by public officials against newspapers and magazines seeking total damages exceeding \$288 million.

Pedro G. Beltran, editor and publisher of La Prensa, Buenos Aires, was installed as president for the coming year. Other officers named were:

Jack R. Howard of Scripps-Howard newspapers, New York, and Julio de Maquie of O Estado of Sao Paulo Brazil, vice presidents; Alfredo Silva Carvallo of La Union, Valparaiso, Chilea, secretary; and John A. Brogan Jr., of the Hearst newspapers, New York, re-elected treasurer.